
Media Release

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SCAG HONORS REGIONAL CHAMPIONS AT 2007 GENERAL ASSEMBLY

General Assembly Also Highlighted by Infrastructure Bond Implementation Workshop, Keynote By California BT&H Secretary Dale Bonner

LOS ANGELES – The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) today recognized three local leaders as Regional Champions for their outstanding achievements at SCAG's 2007 Annual General Assembly. Each year, SCAG honors distinguished individuals who have made special contributions in regional planning and collaboration. Attended by more than 100 local elected officials from throughout Southern California, this year's General Assembly also featured Dale Bonner, Secretary of the California Business, Transportation and Housing Agency, and Senator Alan Lowenthal (D-Long Beach) received the President's Award for his contributions to the Southern California region.

The day's events began with an intensive workshop for SCAG's members to learn more about the process various state agencies are undertaking to implement the bond measures approved by the voters last fall. A series of high-ranking state officials provided the attendees with the various processes underway to begin awarding bond funds to various transportation, housing, water resources, and parks and recreation, and other infrastructure projects throughout the state. The workshop was also marked by a discussion of how SCAG's upcoming Regional Comprehensive Plan – to be released later this year – will help provide a roadmap for how those bond funds can be invested.

SCAG's Community, Economic and Human Development Committee presented their Regional Champion award to Hunter Johnson, President and CEO of LINC Housing Corporation. Johnson has led the 20-year-old nonprofit in its growth from 1,045 to more than 6,000 affordable units across the state, serving diverse limited-income residents including seniors, families, farm workers and special needs households in both rural and urban settings.

Mike Mohajer, a retired official for the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works and a recognized leader in the area of solid waste management, received the Regional Champion award from

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SCAG's Energy and Environment Committee. Mohajer, who has more than 30 years experience in the fields of environmental protection and waste management, served on the California Integrated Waste Management Board's Local Government Technical Advisory Committee.

SCAG's Communications and Membership Subcommittee selected Lisa Howard as this year's Media Regional Champion. As a regional reporter for the *Antelope Valley Press*, Howard focused on state and federal legislation related to transportation, housing and the regional economy. Her work has included numerous articles involving issues of regional significance, including the State of the Region Report, Destination 2030 and Compass Blueprint.

Bonner, whose agency oversees Caltrans and the Department of Housing Community Development at a time when billions in infrastructure bonds are soon to be allocated, as well as the state's \$100 billion dollar long-range infrastructure investment plan and the development of public-private partnerships to help fund certain projects.

"We face a crisis in terms of under-investing in transportation, and it will require a sustained effort over a long period of time to bring major new investments in our infrastructure," said Secretary Bonner. "Even with the significant bond funds approved by the voters last year, the sheer need for project funding means that we need to closely examine ways in which we can secure private sector investment in our infrastructure as well."

Senator Lowenthal, Chair of the Senate Transportation and Housing Committee, as well as the Senate Select Committee on California Ports and Goods Movement, was bestowed SCAG's President's Award in recognition for his many legislative accomplishments that have benefited the Southern California region over the years.

SCAG is the nation's largest metropolitan planning organization, representing six counties, 187 cities and more than seventeen million residents. Now celebrating its 42nd anniversary of service to the region, SCAG undertakes a variety of planning and policy initiatives to plan for a livable, sustainable Southern California now and in the future.

For more information about SCAG's regional efforts, go to the SCAG Web site at www.scag.ca.gov.